

# Our Boys and Girls

## BETTER THAN THE MIGHTY.

"Betsey, ye don't suppose the new minister had me in mind this mornin', do ye?" questioned Willard Gordon, speaking to his granddaughter as they walked along the country road one Sunday early in August.

"You are thinking of the text, grandfather," laughed the girl, a young woman of eighteen years.

"Yes, Betsey, an' the whole sermon. Seemed like he had me in mind. I only wish I could have heard that sermon when I was a young man. 'He thet is slow to anger is better than the mighty; an' he thet ruleth his speerit than he thet taketh a city.' Betsey, thet is whar I've failed all my life. It has kept me in trouble an' kept me poor."

"Your temper only lasts for a minute, grandfather," replied the girl; "you don't mean any wrong."

"Maybe not, Betsey, but it's durin' thet minute thet the damage is done. I'm goin' on seventy year old, an' I presume it's too late to think o' changin'. I only wish, as I said afore, thet I'd heared thet sermon when I was a young man. Things 'ould have been different, Betsey, now I tell ye."

Willard Gordon had the reputation of being the most fiery-tempered man in Lanesboro. There were those who aroused his ire for no other reason than to witness his wrath. Others angered him unintentionally. Few indeed were the Lanesboro folk who at one time or another had not witnessed Willard's ungovernable rage.

"That city chap is pickin' up quite a little jag o' old stuff 'bout town," remarked Lambert Whipple the following morning, addressing Willard Gordon, who had entered the post-office after his mail. "He's got a lot o' old chiny, pieters, an' chairs. Beats all what he pays for some o' the trash. Paid Lucy Holden a dollar for an old cracked bowl that she was goin' to throw away."

"Guess he wasn't losin' no money on it," growled Willard, taking a peek into his box. "Thet fellow has had his eye-teeth cut. Seth was tellin' me this mornin' thet his wife sold an old lookin'-glass to thet rascal for two dollars. Seth had been offered twenty-five dollars for it. Colonel Appleton said he'd pay thet for it any time. Seth jest let it slide, same as he al'ays does. Didn't say nothin' to his wife 'bout the way she's been fooled. Thar ain't no better girl than my granddarter Betsey, but, if she was foolish 'nough to get took in like thet, she'd hear from me, now I tell ye."

"We all have to learn," said Whipple, turning to go.

"She'd learn somethin' from me," snapped back the old man.

While Willard Gordon was talking in the post-office, a light express-wagon stopped in front of his house; and the driver, a young man of perhaps thirty years, alighted.

"Good morning, Miss," he said, lifting his hat to Betsey Stone, the old man's granddaughter, who had answered his summons at the door. "I called to see if you had any antiques which you wished to dispose of."

"I have got an old-fashioned tall clock which I might sell," replied the girl after a moment's thought. "I wish my grandfather was here so he could talk with you."

"May I see it, Miss?" questioned the young man.

"Why, yes, you may look at it," replied the girl; "step in, sir."

"Not a very valuable one, Miss," remarked the stranger a moment later, looking at the clock, a curious gleam coming into his eyes; "but still it is worth something. What will you take for it?"

For a moment the girl hesitated. Her grandmother had given it to her a year previous, shortly before she died. She had told her that it was quite valuable and that the time might come when, needing money, she could dispose of it at a good figure. "It is my little legacy to you, Betsey," she had said.

Now was the time when she did need money, Betsey reasoned. A month later she was to go to the city to study so as to become a teacher. It was all planned out, with the exception of a few extras. Her grandfather had told her that her grandmother had left sufficient means, which would be available when the time came for her to start. Now, she thought, a little extra money would indeed come in handy.

"I will sell it for twenty-five dollars," she said at length, wondering a bit at her audacity at naming so large a sum.

"It is more than I ought to pay," said the stranger, scratching his head; "but I'm going to take a chance. Make out a receipt for the money, and I will take the clock along with me."

Having paid over the money and taken a receipt for it, the young man picked up the clock, and, carrying it out to his wagon, shortly drove off.

It seemed lonesome in the house after the clock was gone. The girl missed tremendously the deliberate tick-tock of the clock; but, consoling herself with the thought that she had, as she viewed the matter, made an excellent bargain, she busied herself getting dinner.

"I presume it wouldn't be a bad idee to tell Betsey 'bout the Colonel's offer for the clock," ruminated Willard as he drove slowly homeward that morning. "Thought I'd keep it from her a spell longer 'bout the three hundred an' fifty dollars he's goin' to pay for it, but she might jest as well know now as any time whar her schoolin'-money is comin' from. No knowin' when thet slick one from the city 'll show up. She's young, an' fifty dollars 'ould look big to her jest now. I guess on the whole I'll tell her about it when I get home."

Presently arriving, Willard put up his horse, and a few moments later entered the house. Betsey being busy setting the table, he picked up the morning paper and began to read. It was not long, however, before he laid it down.

"Guess I must have forgot to wind the clock," remarked the old man, arising. "Thought I missed somethin', Betsey. The clock is dead. Cur'ous how ye'll miss thet tick-tock all of a sudden."

"I—I have got some news to tell you, grandfather," said the girl, pausing in her work. "There was an antique man—"

Willard had stepped to the sitting-room door, and was looking in.

"Ye don't mean thet ye've sold the clock?" gasped the old man, his jaw dropping.

"Yes, grandfather, and didn't I do well? I got twenty-five dollars for it!" exclaimed the girl joyfully.

For a moment the old man was dumb. Words failed him. Fairly purple with anger, he strode to the window and stood looking out across the fields. It seemed to him that he must give vent to his wrath or expire on the spot. He was angry with Betsey for selling the clock, and doubly angry with the stranger for thus duping her. Suddenly came to him the text of the previous day, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty." It flashed upon him what a tragedy the loss would mean to his granddaughter. He recalled the many weary hours she had devoted to her books, studying when many of her girl friends had elected to have a good time. The threatened explosion of wrath passed away. His frame was shaken by a mighty sob.

"Did—did I do wrong?" questioned the girl, stepping up to him and placing her hand on his shoulder.

"Ye meant all right, Betsey," choked the old man; "but thar was three hundred an' fifty dollars hid away in thet clock—the legacy thet Martha left ye. I didn't say nothin' 'bout it 'cause I thought maybe it was safer thar than anywhar else."

"And now it's gone!" sobbed Betsey, throwing herself upon the kitchen lounge.

"Don't ye cry, Betsey," said the old man, stroking her head. "I'm goin' to see what can be done 'bout it. How long has he been gone, Betsey?"

"About an hour, grandfather."

"Driv toward the bridge, didn't he?"

Betsey nodded.

"He's headed toward the city," said the old man, picking up his big straw hat. "I'm goin' to wade 'cross the creek an' head him off. In case he should get by afore I get thar I'll get Henry's mare an' follow him."

"You—you won't get ex-excited?" faltered the girl, arising and placing a restraining hand on her grandfather's arm.

"Thar ain't no man livin' thet can bunco my granddarter an' not hear from me!" growled the old man, growing very red in the face.

"I'm afraid you'll get hurt," cried the girl, clinging to him.

"I ain't afeared o' thet whipper-snapper," snarled the old man.

"But, grandfather—"

"Eat your dinner, Betsey, an' don't worry," he interrupted, opening the door. "I'll be back afore sundown."

The road which the antique man had taken led along the west bank of Lanesboro Creek for a matter of some five miles; there a bridge spanned the stream. On the other side of the creek the road followed the east bank for several miles until it joined the turnpike three miles south of Willard Gordon's farm.

Still flushed with anger, his hands clinched, Willard strode down across the meadow in the rear of the barn, and five minutes later, without stopping to remove his shoes, he started to wade across the creek. It had been a dry season, and the water was less than three feet deep in the middle of the stream. Presently he gained the opposite bank, and a moment later he had taken a seat on a log beside the road.

"Maybe he didn't mean nothin' dishonest," he muttered, edging over into the sun. "Them city chaps has cur'ous idees 'bout business."

Then came to him again the text of the previous day. His tense muscles seemed to relax. His face resumed its normal color.

"Maybe I can explain things to him when